Radio Big World

Killing Garibaldi

A Garibaldian Tale

Joe & Frances Series

Blueprint for a Spin-Off
We Describe You See

From an original idea by Laura Del Veneziano

RADIO BIG WORLD

Killing Garibaldi

A Garibaldian Tale - The Joe & Frances Series

Media House &
Storytelling Academy

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1

Prologue

Agrigento, 1860 — In Girgenti, the Sicilian name of the city, lives Peter Woodville, who moved here with his family when he was a boy. The Woodvilles were originally from Bradford, an industrial town in the Yorkshire region. Oliver (1773-1829), head of the family and father of Peter and his brother Timothy, was an important textile industrialist. He had been a pioneer of the English Industrial Revolution and one of the first to equip himself with those mechanical looms that had forever changed the production of cloth and fabrics.

Set 1 – Backstory -Why Oliver Woodville moved to Italy

In the autumn of 1812, the Woodville textile mills in Bradford became victims of the Luddite movement, a kind of anarcho-syndicalism whose militants attacked factories and destroyed the machinery inside. The Luddites opposed the mechanization of labor because machines took jobs away from everyone, but especially from them and their children. After the third Luddite raid on his factories, Oliver Woodville — tired of repairing the

damage — found the strength to make a choice he should have made long before: dismantle everything and move elsewhere.

England, in fact, to sustain the many wars it was fighting around the world, heavily taxed its citizens and forced industrialists to sponsor and finance entire regiments at enormous cost. Either they complied, or the local authorities would harass them to the point of eventually shutting them down. Thus the Woodvilles had been forced to pay several thousand extra pounds just to keep the business alive. Especially since they had had to support the mother of all wars: that endless duel against Bonaparte, which seemed as though it would never end.

It was believed to be over in 1798 in Abukir Bay in Egypt, when the French fleet escorting Napoleon's African campaign was annihilated — and yet nothing ended; he recovered and even became Emperor. Victory was proclaimed again in 1805 at Trafalgar with Admiral Nelson's triumph at sea, already the victor on the Nile, and yet that was only the Third War against him. Then, from 1807 onward, the Woodville industries suffered from the Continental Blockade decreed by France, which prevented European nations from trading with England and had been going on for five years with no end in sight.

Then, in late spring 1812, Oliver was forced — willingly or not — to contribute to the expenses of the newly begun war against the United States. And to top it all off, when summer ended, the Luddites arrived. It was truly time to say enough.

Leaving, yes — but where? And to do what? Found another textile-manufacturing company? A doomed idea. The textile sector had become far too unstable. As long as looms were manual, the skill of the workforce mattered greatly, a skill that could be achieved only through the master-apprentice system and over a long period of time, often passed down from father

to son. Without skilled workers and without long years of apprenticeship, it was difficult to establish a textile production where such expertise did not already exist. And England — especially Yorkshire — had the best craftsmen of the age.

But since mechanical looms had arrived, anyone, with a bit of training, could operate them. No special skill was needed anymore to work with yarns, and anyone, anywhere in the world, could set up textile factories. Even among the American Indians (the main allies of the English in the war against the USA). And then cotton, hemp, linen, wool — as long as the mills that transformed them into fabric were located only in England, one was forced to bring all those raw materials there, enormously increasing the cost of the finished product.

Now, however, since it was only a matter of machines, it was obvious that textile factories would arise closer to the places where raw materials were produced, or to the places where the finished or semi-finished product would be distributed. Places largely outside the United Kingdom. His business was therefore destined to run out.

Much better to turn to the mining sector, which was in full expansion. Above all, coal — which, with steam, had become the number-one fuel in the world, and whose consumption was constantly increasing. In the mines there were no machines that could attract the Luddites, no risk of having to relocate production elsewhere, and a mining license often cost next to nothing. Unfortunately, English coal extraction was already entirely in the hands of a handful of large companies, and the mines on the European continent were, for the moment, inaccessible because of the wars with the French dwarf, which had made the kingdoms and states of Europe rather unstable or shaky — often openly hostile to the English.

America too overflowed with coal, and even with something better: a more compact form of coal known as anthracite. But Great Britain had just gone to war with the United States. As for other mining alternatives to coal, in terms of business volume, he saw none.

Oliver therefore decided to wait for the right moment before selling the business, and forced himself to be patient, carrying on by regularly paying the government's protection money and trying to contain the outbursts of that mass of anarcho-idiots who quixotically attacked windmills. Although burdensome, Oliver's choice was not reckless. In fact, in 1813, in York itself, the national trial against Luddism opened, with at least sixty defendants. Oliver was heard as an injured party in that trial, which handed down severe sentences to the rioters and effectively put an end to the movement. The mechanical looms were no longer in any danger.

In October of that year came the good news of Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig and the end of the Continental Blockade, so that goods once again began to flow in and out of English markets. Moreover, the Woodville textile industries returned to full production because they obtained a large government contract: to spin the fabrics that would be used to make the uniforms for the soldiers who would later fight at Waterloo — even though at the time no one knew that battle would be fought two years later.

Indeed, with France now occupied by the forces of the Sixth Coalition, Napoleon abdicated, and in April 1814 he was finally exiled to the Island of Elba. But in March 1815 he was once again at the head of the French army — this time for the final clash. Had he defeated the English and Prussian armies deployed in Belgium, nothing more could have been done. England,

exhausted and bled dry by fifteen years of relentless wars, would no longer have been able to provide more soldiers. With Napoleon's victory, the invasion of the island and the end of the British crown would likely have begun.

It ended with Napoleon and Wellington facing each other in June, in a place just south of Brussels known as Waterloo.

On 15 June 1815, the day of the battle, Oliver Woodville — like many other English industrialists — was at the London Stock Exchange to understand immediately what would become of England if Napoleon defeated Wellington. It did not take long to find out. Late in the evening came the news of the English defeat and the French victory. Panicked, shareholders and investors lost their heads. Stock prices collapsed instantly, and industrialists, in fits of hysteria, began selling the shares of their companies at rock-bottom prices. The major buyers that evening were the partners of the Rothschild bank.

Oliver, however, remained clear-headed and did not let himself be swept up in the frenzy of the moment. On the contrary, he thought of imitating the Rothschilds. From a small goldsmith's shop they had become the largest bankers on the continent — they could hardly be fools. So he began offering to buy from those who had not yet sold to them. Among these were the partners of the Anglo-Sicilian Sulphur Company, which exported Sicilian sulphur throughout Europe and held exploitation rights — or agreements — for most of the sulphur mines in the Agrigento area.

The shareholders of the ASSC, with France victorious, were bankrupt. Sicily would have fallen into the French sphere, and Napoleon would have revoked the existing contracts and granted extraction permits — or even a monopoly — only to French companies. Not to mention exports. With the French

Empire having surpassed England, control of the seas would have belonged to Paris. No French ship would ever again load English goods. Their company was therefore worth practically nothing. Nor was Oliver's worth any more, for that matter. Who would ever again buy English textiles after Napoleon, dictating peace to Europe, would strangle the products of the defeated with tariffs and sanctions while favoring French ones? Still, it was better than nothing. Perhaps some hope remained for the domestic market. So the share swap could prove extremely profitable for the ASSC owners.

Sweating cold at the audacity of the move, he proposed an even exchange of shares. They would give him 100% of the Sulphur Company, and he would give them his mills. The agreement was quickly concluded.

Late that night, however, the real news spread through London: Napoleon had been defeated and forced into retreat. Panic erupted at the London Stock Exchange. Those shares that had changed hands for a few pennies instantly quadrupled in value compared to their 14 June price, and the Rothschilds suddenly found themselves owners of a large part of England's industrial and manufacturing sector. Certainly, not all shareholders had panicked, but many had — in what became one of the fastest and most astonishing transfers of wealth in history.

And in this reversal of fortunes, Oliver had not fared badly either. With the new valuations, the Sulphur Company was worth at least twice the entire Woodville textile sector. And there was a reason: more than 90% of the world's sulphur consumption came from Sicily. And the world was now English.

The Congress of Vienna, whose treaties were signed a few days before Napoleon's final battle, did the rest. Since the English were the true victors over Napoleon and those who

had restored the legitimate sovereigns to their thrones, Britain was guaranteed naval supremacy in Europe and in the world, and English subjects and English interests would be welcomed and respected everywhere. Especially in Italy, which Napoleon had almost entirely annexed to France and which England had returned to its rightful rulers — and above all in Sicily.

After the Battle of Austerlitz, Napoleon had invaded the Kingdom of Naples and forced King Ferdinand to flee. The crown of Naples had passed first to Joseph Bonaparte, the Emperor's brother, and then to Joachim Murat, his brother-in-law. Ferdinand had taken refuge in Palermo and, thanks to English protection, had been able to continue being king of the island which, incidentally, Napoleon never managed to take. Then the English, with Waterloo, even gave him back Naples. Ferdinand of Bourbon was therefore a puppet of the British crown: whatever an Englishman asked of him, he would provide.

At dawn on the 19th, Oliver considered his London mission successfully concluded and set off again for Bradford, eager to bring the good news home: the Woodvilles would be moving to Sicily.

2

Set 2 - The Woodvilles move to Italy

While banks and lawyers, between London and York, work tirelessly to finalize the transfer of the respective companies, Oliver Woodville sets sail for Italy to see for himself the state of his new business and to look for a suitable arrangement for his family in view of their permanent relocation to the heart of the Mediterranean. Shortly before his departure, the contracts and notarial seals are finally signed, so that by the time he boards the packet ship that will take him to Palermo — stopping first in France and then in Spain — Oliver Woodville is the actual owner of the Anglo-Sicilian Sulphur Company.

At the port of Palermo, he finds an English employee of the company waiting for him; the management has already been informed both of the change of ownership and of the arrival of the new sole partner. By carriage they reach Agrigento. Oliver finds a Sicily worn down by the Napoleonic wars and by the British occupation, made necessary to defend the island from a possible French invasion. During the Napoleonic wars, the island has become the operational base for the English fleet in the Mediterranean, and London has heavily militarized it.

But it is now late October, and Napoleon, a prisoner, is isolated on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic under constant watch. His rise is definitively over, and English troops and officers are demobilizing. In Agrigento itself stands the official residence of Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, since 1807 commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Fleet stationed in Sicily, who, given the ongoing war with France, has brought his family with him to the island. The headquarters of the Admiralty is in Syracuse, and Collingwood spends much of his time there — when not at sea — living in a noble townhouse in the city. But for his family he has chosen a different residence. He has preferred a country villa far from Syracuse because, had the French attacked, they would have begun there.

Agrigento lies several days on horseback — or half a day by sea — from Syracuse, far enough to consider his family safe and giving them all the time needed to be evacuated in an extreme situation. Agrigento is also more than ten kilometers from the coast, far enough from the range of any potential French naval raids. In the Agrigento villa, the Admiral holds his banquets and official receptions with English, Austrian, American, Russian, and Sicilian guests. More than once he has tried to invite the Neapolitan sovereign in exile to be his guest for breakfast during visits to Syracuse, but Ferdinand has always politely declined. And now there is no longer any chance of hosting him. The Admiral has been recalled to London, where he is expected to be given command of the Atlantic fleet, and he is preparing to leave the villa. His family has already returned to England a few weeks earlier.

Oliver, once in the city, goes to the English consulate to present his credentials and ask for information about any mansion for sale in town or nearby. It takes little time before

they direct him to the Admiral, who is in a hurry to sell and leave. In just a couple of meetings, the deal is settled: for a truly favorable price, Collingwood hands over the villa, the land, and the entire household staff to Oliver. From now on, Villa Collingwood becomes Villa Woodville.

3

Set 3 – Peter and Timothy

Since the Woodville family has already settled in Agrigento in the spring of 1816, Timothy and Peter manage to reach Sicily only in the summer, when the college is closed and students like them are on holiday. They attend a private boarding school near Leeds that keeps students until the age of sixteen. Afterwards, if anything, comes university. But the two brothers have no intention of continuing with Latin and arithmetic. They much prefer the Mediterranean climate and the idea of dedicating themselves to the family business.

In Sicily, unlike in England, the subsoil does not belong to the state but to the owners of the land where the sulphur vents open, and therefore the mines are in the hands of nobles and wealthy landowners. Each of them keeps on site a trusted man — the *gabellotto* — who guarantees the continuity of extraction by paying a fixed fee to the landowner and then reselling the extracted mineral for himself at market prices. Credit and commercialization of the product, however, fall to the exporters, almost all of them English. In fact, after the Napoleonic interlude, the English chemical industry is booming,

and demand for sulphur in the United Kingdom is extremely high for the production of gunpowder and sulphuric acid.

Although there are other contractors operating in Sicily, the Sulphur Company is the one that holds agreements with the largest number of *gabellotti* and counts among its clients the major industrialists of Manchester, Leeds, York, and their surrounding manufacturing districts — men who buy from the Woodvilles because they know Oliver, having dealt with him back when he was still operating in Bradford. Oliver, in fact, returns at least once a year to his native city, where — along with the mills — he has also sold the family villa but has purchased a large townhouse on Market Street, whose ground floor houses the English offices of the Sulphur Company. He uses his stays in England to escape the Sicilian summer heat and to reinforce friendships and contacts that are essential for the continuation and success of his enterprise.

For this reason, given the ever-increasing workload, he cannot manage the Sulphur Company alone for much longer. So the fact that his sons wish to join the business allows him to handle his affairs with far greater peace of mind.

The following year, Timothy is the first to join his father in the business. Oliver takes him along to working breakfasts, to negotiations with suppliers, to the offices of the shipowners who handle the cargoes, to the rooms of fiscal and customs power, and he shows him how to carry out both office work and field work. Two years later, it is his brother's turn. The two boys — partly because they are young, partly because their school Latin helps them — quickly learn good Italian, which allows them to reach places where their father, due to linguistic difficulties, cannot. Thanks to them, many *gabellotti* switch to the Sulphur Company, and the company docks and warehouses expand in

many Sicilian ports. By dealing directly in Italian with local authorities, without intermediaries as other foreign companies must do because their owners do not speak the language, the Woodvilles often secure the best quays and berths.

Someone, however, must also look after the English offices of the Sulphur Company, and in turn — father and sons — they stay in England so that a Woodville is always present in Bradford. Oliver, always and only in summer. Peter, however, dislikes leaving the island regardless of the season. He has grown used to the warm sun and dry climate, to the flavorful and colorful food of the South, to the wine he prefers far more than beer. Bradford is damp, sooty, its sky constantly grey, and its people cold and surly. Timothy, instead, feels a strong nostalgia for Yorkshire; he has friends there and loves riding across the moors in the morning, surrounded by silence and mist.

Thus, already by the mid-1820s, Timothy stays in England even during the period that would have fallen to his brother, while Peter takes care of business in Sicily.

In 1826, Peter marries Mary Ann, the daughter of the Protestant pastor of St George's Church in Taormina. Taormina is one of the ports used by the Sulphur Company, and whenever Peter is in town he never misses, on Sundays, the parish services — the only Anglican church on the entire island — of which he has become one of the main sponsors. Thanks to the Woodvilles' donations, a Sunday school, a small library, and a boarding house for the orphaned children of English sailors who died in the Mediterranean have been built. Through this philanthropic work he meets Mary Ann, although malicious tongues say that Peter's philanthropy is really aimed only at courting Mary Ann and persuading her father to let him marry her.

From their marriage, in 1828, their firstborn Joe is born — who

is also the couple's last child. Because of complications related to the caesarean section Mary Ann undergoes to deliver Joe, she can no longer carry future pregnancies to term, either due to placenta previa or intrauterine deaths. After several exhausting attempts, Peter and Mary Ann accept the fact that they will not be able to have more children.

Timothy, meanwhile, through his business dealings in the circles and clubs of Yorkshire, comes into contact with an artillery colonel responsible for supplying gunpowder to the Fourth and Fifth Regiments of the Royal Artillery stationed in Yorkshire. It is this colonel who introduces him to Commodore Brandon Hawke, originally from Hull — a major port in the East Riding of Yorkshire — who serves at the Admiralty in London and oversees the purchase and supply of naval cannons, including ammunition and powder. The two get along wonderfully. Timothy is well-mannered, shrewd, intelligent, wealthy, and from a family respected throughout the county. He becomes a regular dinner guest at the commodore's home, often even in his absence — though never in the absence of Grace, the commodore's eldest daughter.

After several months of courtship, in 1827 Timothy, with the girl's agreement, asks her father for her hand, and the commodore is more than happy to accept, especially because Woodville and his daughter will be settling in Bradford. Timothy, in fact, intends to buy back the family house which, along with the mills, has passed to the former partners of the Sulphur Company, who, from 1815 to 1821, have managed only to bankrupt the textile industries and leave the property abandoned and seized by the banks.

Oliver dies in 1829, and the shares of the Sulphur Company — which has greatly expanded its range of activity — pass to

the two brothers, increasing their responsibilities and commitments, both in Sicily and especially in England.

In the following decade, in fact, English industrial development and the construction of ever more miles of railway make sulphur even more sought after in the markets of the emerging British Empire, and Timothy finds himself extremely busy shuttling between Bradford and the main English cities, as well as spending long periods in London. He has no time to oversee the reconstruction of the family villa, which in the end he never buys back.

Between 1828 and 1834, Timothy and Grace have three children: Evelyn, Mark, and Henry. All three are born in Sicily, where Grace — for reasons of climate — prefers to carry her pregnancies to term and raise the children until they are fully weaned.

Grace becomes pregnant again in 1835 and moves once more to Sicily, where, in 1836, Amely is born. The Woodvilles are overjoyed at the birth of the baby girl, and the Commodore announces that he has taken a few months' leave to spend some weeks with his daughter, his grandchildren, and the brand-new arrival. But a few days before the officer's departure, a telegram reaches Agrigento reporting that the Commodore has been struck by a sudden illness and is in critical condition at Saint Andrew Hospital in London.

Timothy and Grace then decide to bring forward their departure for England, even though Amely is still far too young to face a sea voyage. The only solution is to leave her in Agrigento with her grandparents: surrounded by a small army of nannies and governesses, she will hardly be badly off. And in any case, once Grace has settled matters concerning her father, she plans to return after a few weeks.

But during the steamship journey toward Manchester, off the coast of La Rochelle, a collision with some submerged wreckage — or perhaps even an explosion on board — sends the ship to the bottom, taking all its passengers with it. The inhabitants of La Rochelle, watching from the shore, see the vessel sink in a matter of minutes. No survivors are found.

The news of the tragic disappearance of Timothy and his entire family, when it reaches Agrigento, leaves the Woodvilles devastated. Patricia, nearly sixty, falls into shock, and the grief for the loss of her son, her daughter-in-law, and her grandchildren is such that she never recovers. Her mind gone, she dies less than a year later, in despair and dementia.

For the funeral rites of the victims of the tragic shipwreck, condolences pour in to the Woodville family from all over the island, while from England comes a flood of telegrams. Amid a jungle of flowers and wreaths, by order of the city's bishop himself, a solemn Mass in suffrage of the lost Woodvilles is celebrated in the cathedral of Agrigento — even though they are Protestants — and, a few months later, it is Bradford's turn. In the presence of Peter, a funeral service is held in the town's cathedral, attended by the bishop, the mayor, and many local notables. But the widespread mourning and emotion change little. The weight of the Sulphur Company now rests entirely on Peter's shoulders.

4

Set 4 - Frank Bailey and the New Course of the Sulphur Company

Peter's ordeal lasts until the Commodore recovers and leaves the hospital. His recovery is as miraculous as the cause of his illness remains unknown. Having resigned from the Royal Navy for health reasons and abandoned all ministerial duties, the Commodore is still an active man, accustomed to command and well connected in influential circles. He himself proposes to Peter that he take charge of the Sulphur Company's offices in Bradford, and Peter is more than happy to accept. For his secretary and personal adviser, the Commodore chooses Frank Bailey, about ten years older than Peter.

Bailey is a lawyer. He has just graduated in law when, in 1820, the Greek War of Independence breaks out — a cause that, like many young men of his generation, he decides to join. All the more so because Frank inherits the surname Bailey from his father, but on his mother's side he is a Kapodistrias. In fact, his full baptismal name is Franklin Nikos Yannis.

The *Kapodistrias* — as they are called in Greek — or *Capodistria*, in Italian, are an ancient noble family from the Triveneto region

who, for generations, have settled on the island of Corfu. The island is conquered by the Venetians in the 1400s and, from that moment on, together with the other Ionian Islands, becomes part of the territory of the Serenissima. The family patronymic refers to the Istrian city of the same name which, in Slovenian, is called Koper and which becomes part of the Republic in the mid-1200s. It is probably from that period that their ancestors arrive in the Istrian city from somewhere in the Veneto lands. In fact, their original surname is *Vettori*, a rather common name in Venezia Giulia.

Then, in 1657, Carlo Emanuele II of Savoy names Lanfranco Vettori Count of Capodistria because, as commander of part of the Venetian fleet, he saves the Piedmontese contingent during its landing from a Turkish naval attack in the War of Candia for control of the island of Crete — a war lasting more than twenty years and ending badly for Venice, which loses its most prosperous colony. But the newly titled Lanfranco fares far better. He is appointed governor of Corfu and establishes the family's permanent residence there. Over the generations, the Kapodistrias provide the island with judges, public magistrates, and high officials, making the family one of the most prominent in Corfu.

Frank's maternal uncle is Count Cesare Arturo Capodistria, the last Venetian governor of the Ionian Islands. His father, instead, is Edward Fitzroy Bailey, the English consul accredited to the governorship of Corfu. He is sent to the islands shortly after the French Revolution to safeguard English military and commercial interests from possible revolutionary agitation.

Bailey finds in the count a loyal ally. The Venetian nobleman has a vision of law and society far ahead of his time. He argues that, yes, it is necessary to abandon old feudal customs and open

the exercise of decision-making power to the deserving, rather than leaving it in the hands of those considered worthy merely because they bear a certain surname — and often are not worthy at all. But he believes that this process of political evolution must unfold slowly, allowing everyone to grow accustomed to the idea, then accept it, and finally make it their own. Destroying everything and cutting off heads, in his view, is not the solution. It never has been. Every uprising in history has always ended only in a useless bloodbath.

The immediate political and diplomatic understanding between the count and the consul turns into friendship and then into family intimacy. In 1793, after not even two years of courtship, Bailey is already married to Despina, the count's sister.

In 1800, after the fall of the Republic of Venice at the hands of Napoleon, the Ionian Islands are occupied by a mixed Russian–Turkish contingent that seizes the archipelago and unites it into the Septinsular Republic, fiscally tributary to the Ottoman Empire but militarily dependent on Russia. Count Capodistria is called to preside over the government of the republic — not for reasons of continuity, but because he is a great jurist, a traveller, and a well-known polyglot. Besides Greek and Italian, his native languages, he speaks the major European tongues: English, French, Spanish, German, and Russian.

Attempts to sabotage the republic follow one after another, carried out by the French through political agitation and outright demonstrative actions led first by the Jacobins and later by the Napoleonic faction. But Count Capodistria is not the sort of man to be intimidated. Venetian by origin but Greek by adoption, he is determined at all costs to keep alive that first sketch of a Greek state which he now governs — alive and independent

of pressure from anyone. France does not frighten him. With persuasion or with firmness, he manages each time to restore order whenever a revolutionary uprising breaks out, and thanks to him, the Republic holds.

In 1807, however, the situation changes when the Ottoman Empire, allied with Napoleon, declares war on Russia. When the Republic refuses to break with St Petersburg and to ally itself with the Ottomans, an order arrives from Constantinople to invade the islands and annex them directly to the Empire. The count is forced to flee to Russia with his wife, Diamantina Golemi, and their children. His sister and her family — including Frank, who is only twelve — leave with them, as does the youngest Kapodistrias brother, still unmarried.

The Capodistrias family remains in Saint Petersburg, as heads of state in exile, until 1815, when, after the Congress of Vienna, the Ionian Islands become the "United States of the Ionian Islands," a Greek state but under British protection. From London they want Count Cesare Capodistria back as head of the executive. The count is already advanced in years and holds the government only until 1820. Then he decides to move to England because, thanks to the good offices of his brother-in-law, the Crown — in recognition of his anti-Napoleonic merits — has granted him a seat in the House of Lords with the title of Baron of Corfu.

Frank's father, Edward, and his mother, Despina, have meanwhile moved to England after the Congress of Vienna, in which Edward has taken part as an expert in Adriatic policy. In London, Edward rises in rank and becomes the first adviser to the Foreign Secretary. He dies in 1819 of malaria contracted during a state mission in Tuscany.

Frank, although born in London because his father wanted his wife to be attended by the best doctors of the empire, is raised by his mother according to the family's traditions and therefore speaks Italian and Greek — though with a strong British accent and a grammar not always of the highest order. It is thus not difficult for him to blend in with the Greek guerrilla fighters and to earn, in the struggle against the Turks, a certain reputation as a courageous, bold, enterprising combatant with a strong sense of honour and duty. Speaking Greek but being English, when Great Britain enters the war in 1824 he is appointed liaison officer between the Greek rebels and the British forces. It is in this role that he finds himself living through one of the most tragic episodes of the entire conflict: the siege of Missolonghi. The third siege, to be precise.

This town in Eastern Greece, built on the shores of a lagoon in the Gulf of Patras and practically facing Cephalonia, has rebelled against the Ottoman Empire and, after repelling two previous attempts to retake it, in 1825 is once again targeted by the troops of Constantinople, who besiege it by land and by sea, given the strategic position of the settlement. But the Turkish naval blockade has very wide gaps, and the port of Missolonghi is fortified and equipped with cannons that keep the Ottoman ships at a distance. As a result, the Greek navy manages to break through with ease and bring supplies to the starving inhabitants, exhausted by the siege and by the relentless bombardments of the Turkish artillery. The city is half destroyed.

In March 1826, the Ottoman troops begin a blanket bombardment and the hand-to-hand conquest of the Missolonghi fortresses that rise on several small islets in the lagoon and that, with their cannon fire, keep enemy ships at bay while allowing supply vessels to enter. One by one, those fortifications fall into

Ottoman hands, and the besieged are therefore doomed.

Admiral Miaoulis, commander of the Greek fleet, no longer knowing how to assist the besieged, asks for desperate help from the English, who send two gunboats to the area. This is the plan: the English and the Greeks are to bombard from the sea the military installations now under Turkish control, thus covering the entry into the harbour of a supply vessel — a ship that, however, will be making a one-way journey, since there is no way to guarantee the naval cover needed for it to leave the port again. On board the vessel there are to be several English officers whose task is to save as many lives as possible by attempting a night-time escape of the besieged.

Volunteers are chosen for the mission, and among them is Frank. The Greek and English ships manage to break the blockade, and the crew of the supply vessel is so skilful in avoiding the dangers that they succeed in reaching their destination with the cargo intact and without losing a single man.

Once the supplies are unloaded and the besieged — especially women and children — are fed and revived, there remains only one thing to attempt: to trust to fortune. The Ottoman troops are deployed to the north and east of the city, while they have left the countryside to the south unguarded, because that stretch of coast faces the lagoon, which is not navigable, and therefore poses no risk of attack on that flank.

A few hours after sunset, while the men still able to fight and stand on their feet are to attack the Turks head-on to keep them occupied, the English officers are to lead groups of women and children toward the lagoon to the south, where the coastal vegetation will offer them cover. At a certain point they will reach a narrow tongue of sand that extends into the lagoon. At that moment the tide will be low, and in that stretch of water

the sea will barely reach their ankles. Taking care that no one gets lost in the darkness or trips on the seaweed and drowns, they will walk all the way to the island of Turlida, which stands at the entrance to the lagoon. From there they will reach the salt-works piers, where Miaoulis's ships will be waiting to take them to safety.

At the moment of action, the Greek diversionary attack is repelled easily — and far too early to allow all the fugitives to reach safety. A portion of those who have fled, hunted down by the Turks, even turns back toward the city, which in the meantime has already been penetrated by the Ottomans. It is a massacre. Of the seven thousand people who attempt the escape, only one thousand manage to flee and be recovered by Miaoulis's ships. The others end up slaughtered both outside and within the city walls.

When, at dawn, the Turks display no fewer than three thousand severed heads on the shattered remnants of the city's ramparts, Frank and the people under his protection find themselves well beyond the enemy lines and within sight of the sails of the admiral's fleet. Only he and a few other English officers have succeeded in bringing their groups of refugees to safety, managing to save the lives of fewer than a thousand people.

The tragic fate of Missolonghi — already known to the world because Lord Byron died there in 1824 — moves the entire international community and pushes many European powers to intervene decisively in the conflict. Britain, which until then has taken part only with a few ships, sends a substantial expeditionary force led by General Richard Church who, once in Greece, obtains command of all Hellenic forces.

Frank is meant to be assigned to Church's General Staff; however, with the war not yet over and independence not yet

secured, the newly formed Greek parliament appoints Ioannis Kapodistrias as the first Greek prime minister. Kapodistrias, Frank's maternal uncle, instead of following his brothers, has remained in Saint Petersburg after Napoleon's fall, and there he has also married. Entering diplomacy in the service of the Tsar, he has served as Russian consul in Turkey, then ambassador to Montenegro, before being recalled to Saint Petersburg to take the post of Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for the Mediterranean.

But Russia is only his adopted country, and when Greece calls, Ioannis answers at once.

As soon as Kapodistrias learns that Frank, the son of his cousin, is a jurist but also a pan-Hellenic hero, he wants him at once as a member of his ministerial cabinet, where he remains until the "uncle's" assassination at the hands of a fanatic in 1836. Returned to England with full honours and several medals, he turns to the army, hoping to be taken into service — perhaps as an officer — boasting numerous successes on the Greek battlefields. But the English command distrusts adventurers, and his application is rejected.

Frank's father, the first chancellor of the Middlesbrough Port Authority, who knows of the Commodore's early retirement and his new activity, secures him an interview at the Sulphur offices in Bradford. The naval officer, who has already heard Frank's name thanks to the great public notoriety he gained after Missolonghi — and who has learned to recognise men of worth at first glance — needs no long conversations. Within minutes, Bailey is already at work. And from the very beginning he proves himself a serious and outstanding professional.

For this reason, when in 1840 the Commodore dies, Peter Woodville entrusts him with the direction of the English

branch of Sulphur. The year 1840 is a particularly happy one for Frank, because along with the promotion comes his first daughter, whom he names Frances in memory of her maternal great-grandmother, born *Frantzeska Karantzas*, married Kapodistrias, though in the family she was always called *Frantzés*, pronounced *Franzìs* in the Ionian dialect.

5

Set 5 - Joe Woodville and Antonio Winspeare

Joe, at the time of the family tragedy, is already eight years old. In a single blow he has lost his aunt and uncle and his three cousins, all his own age. Although they lived in Bradford for most of the year, whenever they returned to Sicily it was a celebration. The games in the park, the pony rides, the boat trips and the picnics in the shade of the ruins of the Greek temples that dot the valley of Agrigento. Joe has beautiful memories with his cousins, memories the sea cannot swallow as it has swallowed their bodies. But apart from memory, Amily is all that remains to him of his childhood.

Joe, an only child in a very wealthy family, has grown up surrounded by Italian nannies and governesses. His father, who already thought of Joe as his successor at the head of the family company, wanted him to learn Italian and Sicilian from a very young age so that he would not have any linguistic handicap limiting his work in Sicily and in the rest of the Peninsula. Therefore, to look after him in early childhood, he hired young local girls who came from a school for poor girls run by the

Sisters of the Sacred Heart and largely funded by the Woodvilles. For the nuns, in short, it did not seem to be a problem to receive donations from a Protestant nor to send him the girls they had painstakingly catechised into Catholicism. After all, the Mother Superior said, the ways of the Lord were infinite. And the bishop, who had repeatedly turned to the Woodvilles for the restoration of diocesan churches, agreed with her. After the four years of schooling, the five best graduates of the school were hired for a year at the villa. Then they made room for others. In that year with the Woodvilles, they earned more than they would ever earn again in their lives — enough to provide themselves with a dowry, a conditio sine qua non for entering marriage. The management of the dowry was entrusted to the Mother Superior, of course, who then also found husbands for the girls.

Peter had opted for this solution because he did not want Joe to grow too attached to the servants — especially the Italian ones. There was, however, no danger that he would grow attached to Miss Maloney, the Governess with a capital G, who supervised the other nannies and took charge of giving little Joe a truly English education. Miss Maloney, already well past forty, had been brought directly from England. Considered the best governess in Yorkshire, she had accepted the position only after the Woodvilles declared themselves willing to pay her twice her previous salary. And that was no small sum, given that Miss Maloney had raised the offspring of the noblest families of York and Leeds. Her financial demands were not tied to the fact of moving to Sicily, but because she needed the money to pay for the studies of her two sons: one was in seminary in Manchester and the other was studying law at the University of Durham. The cost of tuition and their upkeep was a considerable financial burden.

Miss Maloney, a trained educator and amateur poet, not only teaches Joe to speak upper-class English but also, when the time comes, to read and write his mother tongue correctly. While Joe spends many hours each day with Miss Maloney, three times a week an elementary-school teacher from Agrigento comes to teach him to read and write Italian. Another tutor is responsible instead for teaching him French. This continues until 1842, when Joe is admitted as a young pupil to the Nunziatella Military School in Naples. Not that Joe likes the life of a soldier, but his father wants for him a training shaped by leadership, decision-making, and organisational discipline. Nothing better than a military academy. And then, it is not only that.

The sulphur from Sulphur Co. was bought in large quantities by the Bourbon army for its arsenals, which used it to produce gunpowder. The contract with the Ministry of War in Naples had fallen to the Woodvilles thanks to Francesco Antonio Winspeare, of the noble Anglo-Neapolitan family of the same name, originally from Yorkshire. At the time, Francesco Antonio was still a high-ranking military officer, but with responsibilities that were steadily increasing within the Ministry. Peter and Francesco Antonio had met in Palermo during an official military parade held to celebrate the sovereign's birthday. Woodville, as a supplier to the army, had been invited to the honour platform. Being English, from Yorkshire, and one of the richest men in Sicily, he was presented to the nobleman, and a certain sympathy arose between them. Over time, the two exchanged courtesies and reciprocal visits, especially when Peter, for business, was in the Neapolitan capital. Antonio and Davide, Winspeare's sons, were more or less Joe's contemporaries, and they had stayed several times at Villa Woodville in Agrigento,

just as Joe had often been their guest on their estates scattered throughout Campania.

When Francesco Antonio took up the post of director of the military school, he enrolled both Antonio and Davide. He therefore suggested to Peter that he do the same. Having Joe as their schoolmate would only strengthen the esteem linking the two families. And it would certainly not hurt business. Besides, the Nunziatella was one of the best schools in Europe, and since the previous year Francesco De Sanctis, a rising star of Neapolitan culture, had been teaching literature there. Peter therefore accepted his friend's proposal with enthusiasm.

After completing their five years of higher training, Antonio, the eldest Winspeare son, and Joe decide to leave the uniform behind and prepare for a career as diplomats, while Davide continues his military studies in order to enter the Bourbon army as an officer. Peter, who would have preferred Joe to begin his apprenticeship and then take over the family business, does not oppose his son's choice, also because because having a diplomat in the family would allow the Woodvilles to climb at least a few steps of the rigid social hierarchy of Victorian England. All of them would benefit from it.

Antonio and Joe move to England to study law and international law at the University of Oxford. In 1852, however, their paths diverge. Antonio returns to Naples to enter the diplomatic service of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, while Joe is taken into service by the Foreign Office. After his excellent academic results — fluent in Italian and French, serious and disciplined — the ministry assigns Joe to the embassy in Turin as assistant secretary of legation. After about a year he is promoted secretary of legation at the Embassy of Parma, then secretary of embassy in Florence, and finally in 1858 vice-consul

in Modena. A meteoric career that many in London do not look upon favourably. True, the young man is talented, but he is also far too young to burn through such important stages in so little time. On the other hand, the Ministry replies, Joe Woodville is a skilled diplomat, well liked in the circles of the Italic capitals, and a great expert in Italian affairs. Since Piedmont went to war with Austria in '48 and is preparing to conquer the rest of the Peninsula, the Italian situation has become increasingly unstable and chaotic, and diplomats capable of understanding and managing it are needed. And such men are few. Among them is Joe Woodville.

6

Set 6 - Amily Woodville

Amily remembers nothing of her family. All that remains of them is the large family portrait that her grandfather had an Agrigento painter produce to celebrate the child's birth. Yet whenever she happens to look at the painting, those faces mean nothing to her.

When Joe leaves Agrigento to study in Naples, Amily is still very young, and she too comes under the supervision of Miss Maloney who, also at her uncle's request, wants to make a refined lady of her. Amily detests Maloney, but she has enormous fun whenever the governess, even if for justified reasons only, scolds the Italian girls harshly. She enjoys it so much that she becomes extremely skilled at mistreating the servants, subjecting the staff to pranks and bullying, and forcing the villa's employees to submit to her whims. Any attempt to report the girl's misdeeds to the master of the house in search of justice proves useless: with her uncle, Amily knows how to put on such an angelic little face and such a sweet, coaxing voice that he cannot resist her. And so even the sternest reprimand turns at most into a mild suggestion.

Miss Maloney, for her part, knows that the first duty of a noblewoman is precisely to command the servants, and therefore she lets her be. Also because Maloney knows she has no influence over Amily. As in the case of riding. The girl has learned to ride excellently, first on ponies and then on horses, like a young lady of English high society, but she insists on doing it wearing trousers instead of a skirt, like a carter from Liverpool, and sitting astride the horse like a man instead of riding sidesaddle like true ladies. Any attempt by the Governess to dissuade her is useless. And not even in the matter of hunting on horseback has Miss Maloney been able to do anything.

Amily, of course, ever since she learned to ride, never misses a single hunting party, and with her masculine seat she has become the attraction and the wonder of the guests. In fact, Amily not only knows how to ride, but she also handles firearms well — another activity she practises even at home and from which Miss Maloney has never succeeded in dissuading her. And that is not all. Bored with rifles and carbines, and having discovered that falconry in Sicily has been renowned since the Middle Ages, Amily throws herself headlong into this new interest. Her uncle procures a young falcon for her, hires an instructor, and has a piece of land on the Agrigento estate cleared to turn it into a training field.

Amily becomes deeply passionate about falconry because it makes her feel powerful, strong, capable of giving life or death to her prey. At the age of twelve she has her first real falcon and, from then on, the number of birds and hunting outings only increases, to the point that her uncle soon has a large aviary built in the park to house Amily's many falcons. Falcons that Amily also brings with her to Le Ficozze.

One weekend of hunting during the girl's adolescence be-

comes legendary. It seems as though all the game on the estate has vanished. Throughout Friday and Saturday, not a single animal is found. For this reason, on Sunday morning's ride, Amily does not show up. Once the group of hunters sets off, halfway through the morning the dogs begin barking and chasing a hare. The hunters spur their horses and give chase, but the animal is fast and, to escape the hounds, takes refuge in a field of very tall grass. The dogs lose its trail, while the hunters, standing at the edge of the field, watch the scene, puzzled and a little disappointed. Suddenly a whistle cuts through the air, and a falcon dives straight down onto the tall-grass field, seizes the hare in its talons, and rises again to go perch on Amily's arm — she is on her horse atop a small hill. Astonishment, applause, shouts of triumph for her and her falcon. For months, in Sicilian hunting circles, no one talks about anything else.

The girl spends many hours of the day outdoors with her falcons, firearms and horses, but when she returns home she diligently studies English with Miss Maloney and the other subjects with the various tutors. Amily has a gift for languages and speaks English, Italian, French, and German. She is also skilled at playing the piano. Then, once she turns sixteen, the time comes to send her to a boarding school so that she may adopt the manners and customs of the aristocracy in view of a marriage that, for a girl like her, would come soon: young, beautiful, wealthy, and healthy. Suitors will not be lacking.

For her, the convent school of SS. Annunziata in Florence is chosen — a renowned private institution for the daughters of the nobility and the highest Italic and international society. The school is housed in a beautiful and ancient villa at Poggio Imperiale, surrounded by greenery and woods. Amily agrees to attend, but convinces her uncle to rent a small villa with a

park near the school, to have Miss Maloney move to Florence as the household Governess, and to bring along some of her falcons. The school, in exchange for a generous donation, grants her special permission to reside outside the boarding school on Saturday afternoons and all of Sunday, returning on Monday morning. She spends almost all of that time riding, shooting, and with her falcons. And thank goodness, the servants sigh, because otherwise in those two days she would drive them mad with scoldings and whims.

Her schoolmates in Florence are almost all daughters of marquises, counts, dukes, and many barons. There are only a few, like her, who do not have a coronet on their heads, even though she is wealthier than a good half of them. Haughty, scornful, irreverent, they never miss a chance to remind Amily that she is a foreigner and not Italian, Protestant and not Catholic, that her family deals in ignoble business, and that she rides and hunts like an ignorant peasant. Excluded from the circles of the most popular girls, forced to give up her seat whenever a titled classmate decides to sit where she is — whether in class or in the dining hall — Amily makes no friends in Florence, where the only days worth living are those spent riding and hunting along the Arno or on the hills of Fiesole. Or driving the servants mad.

Once her five years at the boarding school are over, Amily moves to Naples, where her uncle has bought her a villa by the sea in Posillipo, which remains under the supervision of Miss Maloney — now well over seventy, yet still capable of managing the household of a distinguished residence. Without her, the young Woodville would find herself without servants within a week.

Amily has grand plans for her Neapolitan stay. She intends

to create a circle of intellectuals to gather in her salon, to make contact with the capital's high society, to be the queen of balls and banquets, and above all to catch — and marry — a young and handsome aristocrat who would introduce her into Neapolitan nobility and, who knows, perhaps even at court. But Amily soon realises that, to achieve such a dream, it is not enough to be beautiful, wealthy, lively, and independent. Neapolitan aristocracy is closed, militaristic, Catholic, and traditionalist. It would hardly open its doors to parvenus, least of all foreigners, Protestants, merchants. What ought to be her winning card — the Woodville name and fortune — turns out to be a boomerang. Being the heiress of a family of sulphur industrialists who became such through speculation, however immensely rich, is an indelible stain in the eyes of Neapolitan high society, which lives on military and chivalric glories, even if not always very recent.

Moreover, her independence and her masculine passions and manners — in riding, for instance, and in hunting — make her suspect even to the wealthy bourgeois families, who do not want their daughters taking bad example from her or being inspired to any rash behaviour. So: few balls, few parties, few banquets. The only invitations she receives come from English visitors temporarily in Naples — some for business, some for study, some for tourism. The great Neapolitan intellectuals are sought after in salons far more distinguished than Amily's, and she, at best, manages to gather a few penniless poets or second-rate writers who have disembarked from some English or French ship without a coin to their name. As for marriage proposals... they are either blatantly self-interested or advanced by improbable characters. So much for Prince Charming.

Among the unfortunate intellectuals who end up in her house

there is a decent young man named Niccolò Tucci d'Aragona who, despite his grand-sounding name, is the youngest of many siblings from an impoverished branch of those Counts Tucci d'Aragona who had sided with the French and with Murat and who, once Napoleon fell, were stripped of their positions, had their goods and properties confiscated, and were banned from public office. Niccolò has a certain artistic streak, which he channels into the production of tragedies with vaguely Greek themes but with little that is truly original. Amily has taken him in, cleaned him up, fed him, and gives him a bit of money to pay his debts and the rent of the tiny room he lives in in the Spanish Quarters. Because he is the only man of noble blood who has agreed to keep her company.

Polite and well-mannered, the young man acts as her escort and accompanies her to the theatre or the opera, or on horseback rides through the parks and surrounding countryside. Naturally, all at Amily's expense, while Miss Maloney keeps shaking her head. And not because of Parkinson's.

7

Set 7 – Return to Agrigento

Miss Maloney dies in early January 1860 after having been bedridden since autumn. Amily sends a telegram to the woman's sons, and one of them, Kile Granger, the lawyer, comes all the way to Naples to attend the funeral. Also because he does not have much to do back home. In fact, although he obtained his law qualification, he had not fared particularly well at the bar, and so, to get by, he had fallen in with unscrupulous speculators who later involved him in small scandals of corruption and fraudulent bankruptcies. The death of his elderly mother comes at just the right moment for him. By moving to Italy he can lie low for a while, waiting for things to calm down at home, and in the meantime he can go hunting for business in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies which, in the midst of the unification war, is in full ferment.

Miss Eleanor Maloney is commemorated at the British legation in Palazzo Calabritto which, being extraterritorial, hosts religious ceremonies since Protestant worship is forbidden in Naples and in the rest of the Kingdom (Sicily excluded). She is then buried in the English Cemetery in the Borgo Sant'Antonio

Abate, at Piazza Santa Maria della Fede. Peter Woodville does not attend the ceremony because he is away on business in Malta, but the Winespeare brothers are present, having known her during their stays in Agrigento, along with a small crowd of English acquaintances of Amily and a few unfortunates from her personal court of miracles.

Amily, who detested the woman, must nonetheless show public signs of mourning and appears in a voluminous black dress, accompanied by Tucci d'Aragona in a brand-new funeral suit — yet another gift from Amily to make him presentable even on this occasion. For the funeral, her cousin Joe has also arrived in Naples: with the legation in Modena closed after the duchy was conquered by the Piedmontese, he has been transferred to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies as vice-consul with a delegation for Sicily. For the moment he will take up service in Naples, and the death of his beloved governess marks a very poor beginning for him.

At his cousin's insistence, Joe moves in with her in Posillipo, and thus he can see for himself that something is not right in Amily's management of the house. The constant coming and going of mediocre, idle men of letters who show up to cadge a meal or a few coins; that Tucci d'Aragona who writes plays so worn-out with clichés that listening to him declaim his works is almost embarrassing; and Kile Granger, who does not seem in any hurry to return to England. And then there is a general atmosphere of irritation among the servants.

Joe leaves the house very early and returns late because of work, and on weekends he is often a guest of the Winespeare brothers, so he does not realise what is happening at home. But by mid-February the signs of insubordination among the servants are obvious. Beds made poorly, laundry ironed in

haste, the garden left to weeds. He tries asking them directly for explanations and receives in return a long list of complaints, discovering the pranks, whims, and cruelties his cousin inflicts on the household staff, whom she treats like dressed-up apes. As long as Miss Maloney was in charge of the household, Amily's nastiness was bearable, but now the servants have had enough. If things do not change, or if a competent governess is not found quickly, the entire staff will leave — and they will spread the word throughout Naples so that she will not find even a dishwasher willing to work for her.

Distressed by the situation, Joe writes a long letter to his father explaining what is happening — sparing the more sordid details — and urging him to find someone to replace Miss Maloney and take charge of Amily's household. After sending the letter, Joe asks the servants to be patient a little longer.

Then, at the end of February, Joe receives orders from London to move to Palermo and take up service at the consulate as vice-consul acting in place of the titular consul, who has been recalled to England for "consultations." It is the perfect opportunity to take Amily away and give the servants some respite before the arrival of the new governess. Joe therefore proposes that Amily accompany him to Sicily. Amily wants nothing to do with leaving Naples, but Joe, insisting, convinces her by promising that she will be invited to the banquet for his installation and that the ball on the following evening will be held in her honour. Amily then declares herself persuaded and begins preparing. She has an evening dress and custom shoes made, and commissions an elegant suit for Niccolò as well. For about ten days she drives the maids mad with the packing of the trunks, but finally, on 3 March 1860, Joe, Amily, and Niccolò Tucci d'Aragona are aboard the steamer bound for Palermo.

With them is also Granger, who wants to visit Peter Woodville in person to thank him for what he did for his mother, and then — he promises — he will depart again to return to England.

8

Set 8 – Frances Bailey

On 5 March 1860 Joe Woodville formally takes up service at the legation in Palermo, and as promised the following evening a sumptuous party is held at Villa Woodville — apparently to allow Amily to show off her new dress, but in reality to celebrate the Woodvilles' return, perhaps definitive, to the District of Girgenti. A good part of Amily's household staff has followed the two young Woodville heirs to the old residence, but they still lack a guide: the governess who, in the arduous task of replacing Miss Maloney, is expected to restore order, cleanliness, stability, and above all a calmer atmosphere. At least this is Joe's hope, given also the constant presence of that Tucci d'Aragona who continues to occupy spaces that are not his, with his cousin's full approval.

Finding a governess capable of taking on such an ungrateful task is certainly not easy, and for several days Joe spends his late afternoons after work receiving and evaluating the references of the many women — probably unaware of the real situation — who present themselves for the vacant position.

Frank Bailey, for twenty years now at the head of the English branch of the Sulphur Co., after the birth of his first daughter Frances has expanded his lineage with three sons whose eccentricity and exuberance have kept the whole family more than busy. Perhaps partly because of this strong and overwhelming male presence in the house, or perhaps as a reaction to the milder, calmer, more measured side her father has shown since obtaining his current managerial post — but above all because of her own rebellious nature — Frances, approaching her twentieth year, begins to display a determination that, unsurprisingly, reveals shades quite different from those her father had envisioned for her since birth.

Her mother fell gravely ill during Frances's early adolescence and, when she passed away, Frances — the only female voice left in the house — inherited from her not only love but also a vast store of knowledge and sound strategies for the struggles women have always been destined to face in order to make their way in the world. These pieces of advice, warnings, and suggestions are firmly imprinted in Frances's mind.

At her mother's death, Frances is a singing student at a women's conservatory. She knows music, can play several instruments, and sings as a soprano. She knows French and, above all, Italian — the two languages in which almost all operas are written. Her studies occupy her greatly, yet Frances, left alone, nonetheless takes the reins of the family and manages the life of her father and brothers like a true mistress of the house.

Beyond her studies, she succeeds in managing the five members of the household staff: supervising the cook and the kitchen; the two maids who take care of the rooms and cleaning; the gardener who tends the small park attached to the residence;

and the coachman, who is in charge of the carriage, the gig, the horses, and the stable. With her at the helm, there is never a meal served late, never a room dirty or in disorder, never a weed or an overgrown hedge, never a dusty carriage or a neglected horse. Not least, Frances oversees her little brothers in their studies and enables them to attend the best English public schools — Eton, Harrow, and Winchester.

Having completed her training as a spinto soprano only a few months earlier, it is precisely on the occasion of her twentieth birthday that the young woman informs her father of her intention to leave, to detach herself from the family and all its privileges, to start again from zero (or almost) and build her future as a woman with her own hands.

Frank is at first undeniably shaken by his daughter's announcement — perhaps more than the pain of separation, it is the fading of the hope of having his beloved girl always by his side, even in old age, that unsettles him — but when he feels within himself the echo of all the strength and fire typical of that age, which life has perhaps made him forget a little, he tries in every way to set aside his paternal desires in favour of his daughter's choices. Clearly, this cannot mean stepping aside entirely.

Thus, when Peter, during one of his routine returns to Bradford in the first half of 1860, confides in him about the difficulty of finding a governess, Frank thinks at once of proposing Frances. The girl certainly does not lack experience in household administration, and this is exactly what the Woodvilles need. Peter telegraphs his son, and Joe accepts without hesitation, and so, from mid-April 1860, Frances Bailey enters service in the Woodville household as head governess.

9

Set 9 – Garibaldi's Imminent Landing in Sicily

From the moment Frances arrives, the island talks of nothing else but General Giuseppe Garibaldi who, at the head of a revolutionary army wearing red shirts as their uniform, will conquer Sicily and free it from the yoke of the Kingdom of Naples. Then Garibaldi will continue on to Naples, where he is expected to force the Bourbon sovereigns to abdicate and bring Southern Italy into a unified, modern Italy oriented toward progress and development. The Neapolitan administration is obsolete, inefficient, corrupt, and is dragging the kingdom's economy into such decline and backwardness that the only foreseeable future is one of social injustice, hunger, and misery.

At the Woodville household there is a constant coming and going of aristocrats and wealthy English merchants settled in Sicily who come to confer with Joe and seek reassurance about the future of their properties and their trade. Joe tries to calm Her Britannic Majesty's subjects by pointing out that England itself supports the general, that it is thanks to British money and the British military umbrella that Garibaldi will reach Palermo

and Naples, and that he, as plenipotentiary on the island, will maintain relations between the English and the Garibaldians. Indeed, in the early stages of the conquest of Sicily, Garibaldi will often come to the Woodville residence to confer with him and plan the next moves. English assets are not in danger and will not be touched by the revolt or the rebels. Many of the petitioners feel relieved at these words.

Amily, as mistress of the house, also takes part in these meetings, especially when they stretch into dinner. She has no interest in politics or economics, so she finds much of the conversation tedious, but she is no fool and knows how to conduct herself in society. Yet beneath her polite smile and the seemingly conventional feminine silence behind which she shelters, her mind works at a frantic pace.

What Amily realises is that General Garibaldi will arrive in Sicily with the precise aim of fighting and overthrowing the Bourbons, who will not only lose the island but, after a few months, will lose their kingdom altogether. From what she has understood of this military expedition, it is made up of a limited number of volunteers who hope to increase their ranks by recruiting local anti-Bourbon insurgents as they advance. These "redshirts," as they call themselves from the colour of their uniform, are often young, fanatical patriots with no military training whatsoever. They hold together only thanks to Garibaldi's charisma and military skill.

This might be the opportunity Amily has been waiting for. If Giuseppe Garibaldi were to disappear from the equation, and if his removal from the game were her doing, she could return to Naples in triumph. The Bourbons, recognising the importance of the matter she had resolved, would invest her with the title of Princess of the Two Sicilies, name her Noblewoman of the

Queen, and she would always be welcome at court. From there, her ascent into the Neapolitan aristocratic jet set would begin. Since the rebel general will often be at the Woodville residence, eliminating him should not be difficult. Though the operation must be carried out with tact, style, and intelligence — as befits a princess. So it is decided: she will kill Garibaldi.

That is, she will not do it herself, of course, but that simpleton Tucci will — and in doing so he will regain from the king his titles, his lands, his palaces, and all the honours of his rank. They will marry and together form the noblest and richest couple in the entire kingdom, rivalled only by the wealthiest families in all Italy. Poor Tucci, after a few years of happy marriage, will meet a death as tragic as it is unexpected, and thus all titles and riches will pass to her. At that point she will aim to marry some European heir apparent and become queen of a realm of her own. Her former schoolmates will die of envy — but only for a while, because she will have them physically eliminated one by one by the secret-service assassins of the country she will rule. Some of them — the nastiest ones — will die directly under the fire of her rifles. Once she is queen, it will be child's play to invite them to her court, accuse them of espionage, and bring them before a firing squad of which she herself will be the commander.

Come on, Garibaldi — land soon!